Illinois Early Learning Council
Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee
Thursday, August 8
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Ounce of Prevention Fund
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Participants
In-Person: Elliot Regenstein, Kim Collins, Jonathan Doster, Dawn Thomas, Dan Harris, Eboni Howard, Teri Talan
Phone: David Alexander, Cindy Zumwalt, Joellyn Whitehead, Bob Spatz, Brenda Klosterman

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

2. **A Remembrance of Harriette Herrara**
   Led by co-chair Teri Talan, the Committee reflected on the life of Harriette Herrara, who passed away last month. She was involved in many aspects of the early childhood education field, including the Early Learning Council and the DRE Committee. A number of committee members discussed the ways in which Harriette touched their lives and the lives of children across Illinois. Her passion was only matched by her kindness towards others.

   A resolution was passed through the Illinois General Assembly honoring her life and work. She will be missed.

3. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
   The minutes from the May 14, 2013 meeting were formally approved.

4. **JSI RFI update**
   The Committee provided a brief update on the JSI RFI process. OECD has hired JSI again to review the responses to the RFI. Once JSI has read and analyzed the submissions, they will draft a summary report for the Governor's office. The core team will then use the RFI responses and the JSI report to develop the RFP.

5. **Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant update**
   Federal officers approved the State's scope of work for the RTT-ELC Phase 2 grant. The award, totaling $34 million, is now available and Illinois can move forward with full implementation. In addition, the State received approval on the assurances and brief budget for the RTT-ELC Phase 3 supplemental funds. A scope of work is being developed for the additional $17 million and is due in September. (Approximately $3 million of these additional funds will be spent on "Data.")

   The Committee discussed how the next phase of the RTT-ELC grant will elicit applications from states which have not before applied. These applications will give the Committee a look into what other data activities (collection, systems alignment, etc.) states are doing. The Early Learning Challenge Collaborative has an opportunity to create some community across states. Some of the

leading states (Pennsylvania, Georgia) do not have RTT-ELC grants. The Committee discussed the benefits of convening a conversation of the states which are known to be "ahead" on data. Between the Child Trends survey and the next round of RTT-ELC applications, the Committee will be able to learn more about which states are in the "same boat" as Illinois. This issue was discussed further during the REL conversation (item 9 below).

Also, a number of people have asked members on the Committee's report on Head Start on the barriers to getting Head Start into the system. It has been shared with people in HHS and others.

6. **Hard to Reach Subcommittee populations follow-up**
The Hard to Reach Subcommittee of the Family and Community Engagement Committee is developing a data-driven approach to identifying "hard to reach" populations. The subcommittee is charged with increasing access for these populations, so it is trying to capture who is currently being served. It brought this topic to the DRE Committee in the spirit of cross-collaboration: these populations should be on the committee's radar as it works to set up the Unified Data System; in addition, the subcommittee would also appreciate feedback from the committee on how these populations are defined and/or potential data sources that could be used to measure these populations. IECAM is still on the lookout for certain types of data that may be relevant to the specific populations the organization is labeling "hard to reach."

In addition, the Hard to Reach Subcommittee is working to change its name. When the Subcommittee says "Hard to Reach," it is looking at the issue from the perspective of the program; yet sometimes it is the program itself that is hard to reach, and not the families.

Lastly, DHS is now using information from the Hard to Reach report internally. The department funds a number of community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide services and it faces challenges reaching certain families. Currently, DHS has staff who provide technical support to these CBOs, many of whom have now been given the report.

7. **Research Database update**
The Committee's work plan calls for it to propose the development of a database to track relevant research on early care and education and allow Illinois stakeholders to readily find information about early childhood research to support their work. In May, IECAM distributed a draft document to committee members with some key questions as well as a few tentative decisions about how such an effort might be organized. Between the May and August DRE Committee meetings, committee members submitted comments and suggestions to IECAM. The DRE Committee co-chairs then held a call with IECAM to discuss said comments. IECAM pared down these ideas and created a second version of their original document, which was distributed at the August 8th meeting.

To begin, IECAM thought it was important to revisit why the committee was thinking about creating a research database, so it looked back at the DRE Committee workplan. Relation to workplan:
- Objective 2:
  - Action Step 1: Identify and help prioritize needs of other ELC committees
  - Action Step 2. Be a source for collecting information from the appropriate entities, developing a research database, and identifying opportunities
  - Action Step 3. Share suggestions
- Objective 3:

        ○ Action Step 1. Determine and create a database of research and evaluation projects currently occurring in the state
        ○ Action Step 2. Identify relevant research and evaluation projects currently underway in other states.
        ○ Action Step 3. Identify gaps in research and evaluation

As such, the workplan gives the Committee certain tasks: (1) collect information; (2) develop a database; and (3) identify gaps in research (based on 1 and 2). This current effort is to include research both in Illinois and in other states.

Following the conversation with the Committee co-chairs, IECAM determined there to be three options for the DRE Committee to review:
1. **Full website and database:** Create a website and online database. The latter would be a bibliographic database of completed and current research taken from other sources (e.g., ERIC, Education Full Text), possibly with a few full-text documents, but mostly with links to full-text documents when those are available.
2. **Scaled-down web site with some resources related to education research**: Create a website with links to other data sources and instructions on using them; perhaps include a very small database of research not available elsewhere; and documents in which DRE Committee provides some analysis (e.g., identifying gaps in research) and explanation.
3. **Referral only** Refer people to other sources, whether it be ERIC or Education Full Text

Option #1 would require a substantial effort to create and then to maintain. Option #2 would require a moderate effort to start up the website, but minimal effort to maintain it. Option #3 would require very little effort. IECAM isn't recommending any of the three options, but it would be most interested in putting forth to the Committee Option #2.

IECAM believes it is important to include some instructions as to how to use the database. This could include general information, such as what is the range of research covered by the database and what journals are indexed in it. The Committee might also provide instructions on how to do a search in the database. At least for some databases, such as ERIC, the Committee could offer suggestions of what terms to use in order to focus on some particular topic, or to find research focused on Illinois. This deserves further conversation. For those studies underway but not completed, there are several sources IECAM has found for studies in-progress. The Committee could provide links to those and instructions on how to use them.

Further conversation would need to be held with regard to how the Committee would:
- identify gaps in research
- compare Illinois research with research in other states
- develop a list of research needs of other ELC committees
- establish recommendations for ELC Executive Committee
- develop list of common research questions with suggested basic readings/bibliography

Other web features and activities suggested include:
- present a blog for researchers, practitioners on research-related topics

- hold a conference, workshop, or other such venue to encourage researchers in areas of research need; or present a session at the annual Illinois Education Research Council conference or other such event.
- Have regular meeting between DRE and representatives of ELC and/or other ELC committees
- Those DRE members who work with policymakers periodically inform policymakers of the work of DRE

In summary, the project and its website will/may provide an overview of DRE workplan; links to databases of education-related research; instructions on using the databases; suggested searches of the databases; links to sources of ongoing but not-yet-completed research; some ancillary analysis, information, and similar resources; other non-informational web features (e.g., forms); and other related activities (e.g., blog, conference presentations).

Committee members restated that the development of this research database is principally for the DRE Committee's colleagues on the Early Learning Council. ELC Committee members and staffers should be able to find both published research and research underway easily, which would allow them to answer existing research questions or identify additional research needs. Where there are existing databases, the Committee should be leveraging them to the maximum.

DRE Committee members discussed how the first audience for the research database will be other colleagues on the Early Learning Council. Hearing thoughts and needs from ELC colleagues will allow the DRE Committee to develop better their broad research agenda. The Committee might think about tailoring instructions to what it is our colleagues might be looking for.

If the Committee wants the research database hosted at the University of Illinois, IECAM might be able to get graduate students at the University of Illinois Library School to design the database and maintain it. There are enough students around with expertise. IECAM offered to collaborate with a graduate student to create mock-up dummy pages for review to present at the next DRE Committee meeting.

Having full text is critical, yet there are costs associated. In the past, U of I has worked with "outsiders" to get full text or excerpts of articles. Through ERIC, colleagues could see there is research on a topic, but they might not be able to see the full text free of charge. IECAM will start conversations with the University to discuss possible collaborations. In addition, IECAM will look into further collaboration with the University of Illinois and research the cost to build and maintain the database/website in case the Committee needs to pursue grant funding.

The more the Committee eliminates steps and protocols, the more colleagues will use the research database. The Committee might identify ideas on how to collect questions, and talk to other committees on the ELC to see how they might like to use any developed steps or protocols.

Brenda Klosterman from the IERC wondered if the scaled-down option would still leave for research summaries or the pulling-out of brief policy implications. IECAM thought that there might be some research/documents that need simple analysis, but it depended on what the committee decides. The Committee's instinct is that there might be a need for it, but they won't be resourced to provide that to whoever wants it. The Committee, however, might be able to mobilize resources when the ELC has priorities.

Committee members discussed the need to determine just how much energy the Committee will put into being "all things to all people." If a database is created that is slimmed down and designed to be useful to the community served most directly by the Committee, it will have best chance of being used and being useful without costing a tremendous amount of money. Because some databases do provide abstracts and links to further analysis, the Committee should maximize the use of preexisting summaries/abstracts so the only time it expends resources and energy is when no one else in the world is providing such write-ups and the request is a specific need of someone served by the Committee.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Identify, via Catherine Scott-Little, the California website that allowed users to submit research
- **ACTION ITEM:** Bernard Cesarone and Dawn Thomas will start conversations with the University of Illinois to discuss possible collaborations with regard to the research database
- **ACTION ITEM:** Bernard Cesarone and Dawn Thomas will identify graduate students to create mock-up pages of the research database for review at the next DRE Committee meeting
- **ACTION ITEM:** Bernard Cesarone and Dawn Thomas will research the cost to build and maintain the research database/website
- **ACTION ITEM:** The DRE Committee will begin conversations with other ELC committees to see how those bodies might like to use the research database

8. **Short update on Ad Hoc Committee, dashboard**
Kellogg released a report on markers for child well-being. The document synthesized and analyzed a number of different indicators and had it reviewed by experts in the field for "content validity." Committee members thought it would be interesting to crosswalk those indicators with the ones the DRE Committee submitted to JSI (whether or not will be collecting data that's aligned with these indicators). The DRE Committee staffer will send out a link to the report.

In addition, the Governor's office hired Child Trends to work with the ad hoc committee to analyze the current list of indicators and make recommendations based on what other states have done. In addition, Child Trends and the Ad Hoc committee will create a gap analysis on what indicators the committee wants and what data is available for the dashboard.

9. **Discussion of possible partnership with the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Midwest**
Dr. Eboni C. Howard, the Principal Early Childhood Specialist for the American Institutes for Research (AIR), presented on the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Midwest at the American Institutes for Research. REL Midwest is a five-year contract funded by the U.S. Department of Education. AIR has received funding for several years. In its current contract (second year going into its third year), the REL Midwest is organized by research alliances structured around particular content areas, one of which is Early Childhood Education. The EC REL focuses on understanding and improving the quality of early childhood education programs.

The REL Midwest covers seven states (IL, MN, MI, IN, IA, OH, and WI); the Early Childhood Alliance has representation from every state except Indiana. Illinois' representative is Reyna Hernandez from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The REL is interested in expanding – adding additional members, subgroups, and committee groups.

Alliance members try to drive the activities of the work. What can the REL support?

- Provide access to various policy, research, and administrative bodies with access to national experts in research
    - For example, someone may call REL for research on the impact of early childhood education, and the REL will write a research brief (5-10 pages)
- Webinars, public television, conferences, etc.
- Work with states and local entities to build the capacity of data use
    - TA / consulting projects on data use
    - In Early Childhood, the REL Midwest did a data and research catalog on QRIS systems across all seven Midwest states
- Applied research studies that can support policy or programmatic decisions
    - Sometimes random control trials (RTCs)
    - In Early Childhood, REL Midwest is working with the state of Michigan, which wondered whether a change in the way the state calculated their QRIS system would change the distribution of quality across the state

All requests to the REL Midwest come from policy bodies like the Early Learning Council and all funding comes from DOE. The federal government does require an approval process, which usually takes six to nine months for a research project. Smaller data requests take much less time.

The REL Midwest is now in the process of writing concept papers (half-page concepts submitted to the DOE). From those concepts, DOE gives the REL a "green light" or "red light." These papers are due in September and formal proposals are due in November.

One of the Committee's central projects has been the development of linkages across multiple data systems, so that we can connect information about children, personnel, and programs more effectively. As discussed in the meeting, the DRE Committee would like to see where states are in their data system development process – are they engaged in a process similar to what Illinois has done, and if so, where are they? Longer-term, the Committee would be interested in partnering with the REL and providing support to stakeholders in using the new information produced by this data system, once the linkages have been built out.

- **ACTION ITEM:** DRE Committee staffer will send Dr. Howard the DRE Committee workplan
- **ACTION ITEM:** Teri Talan will talk to Linda Satterfield re: QRIS research
- **ACTION ITEM:** The DRE Committee co-chairs will set up a conversation with the REL Midwest to discuss possible research projects

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS FROM 8/8 MEETING
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- Bernard Cesarone and Dawn Thomas will start conversations with the University of Illinois to discuss possible collaborations with regard to the research database
- Bernard Cesarone and Dawn Thomas will identify graduate students to create mock-up pages of the research database for review at the next DRE Committee meeting
- Bernard Cesarone and Dawn Thomas will research the cost to build and maintain the research database/website
- The DRE Committee will begin conversations with other ELC committees to see how those bodies might like to use the research database
- The DRE Committee staffer will send Dr. Howard the DRE Committee workplan

- Teri Talan will talk to Linda Satterfield re: QRIS research
- The DRE Committee co-chairs will set up a conversation with the REL Midwest to discuss possible research projects